**Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Background Information**

**The Organisation**

Citizens Advice Bureaux are the major providers of information, advice and assistance, operating from 219 service points that cover Scotland from the islands to the City Centres.

The Bureaux are staffed by trained volunteer advisers, paid support, specialist and management staff, and provide responses to clients' enquiries covering the whole range of social issues. Despite being a generalist service, most enquiries are concerned with matters related to problems of poverty and deprivation.

Bureaux are autonomous bodies under the control of a local or Board of Trustees. All bureaux are members of Citizens Advice Scotland (The Scottish Association of CABx), and as such must meet specific conditions of membership related to standards of service and other matters.

Enquiries are across a wide range of fields, and clients expect high quality advice and assistance (including representation at tribunals and in Court when appropriate) on what are, at times, highly complex matters. The main enquiries at the present time relate to problems with social security and money; housing; goods and services; employment; and family and personal situations.

**Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau**

The Bureau has been providing an independent advice service in Hamilton since 1970. While not being in the Town Centre, the Bureau is very close to the Sheriff Court, the Jobcentre Plus and South Lanarkshire Council Offices. It is close to several bus routes and a few minutes walk from Hamilton West Railway Station.

The Bureau became an incorporated company limited by guarantee in January 2010 and is a charity registered with the OSCR. Our work is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Hamilton CAB operating area includes Larkhall, Stonehouse, Blantyre, Bothwell & Uddingston. Some of our services have a wider geographical catchment – primarily the In-CourtLay Representation Projectwhich covers the Hamilton and Lanark Sheriff Court areas and our Health Hubs operate in five centres across Hamilton & Clydesdale.

We operate from two main facilities: the Bureau and an additional administrative office in Cadzow Street; we also provide a full-time service from our office within Birnie House at Hamilton Sheriff Court. We operate a both a drop-in at the Bureau and a responsive outreach service in health and community settings as well as offering home visits where required.

**The People**

Our Board of Trustees provide support for the Bureau Manager and ensure the good governance of the organisation.

We currently have 22 volunteer advisers. A group of 9 volunteers are at ATP Stage 2 training. We participate in the Community Jobs Scotland Scheme offering employment opportunities to younger people in advice, customer service. A team of 18 paid staff provide specialist advice and management support across the services. The Manager has day-to-day operational management control within the agreed strategic and policy framework.

We operate within Investor in Volunteer Standards.

**Funding**

The Bureau has service level agreements in place with South Lanarkshire Council for core and money advice services; the Scottish Legal Aid Board for the In-Court Lay Representation service; SL Health & Social Care Partnership fund the Health Hubs; SSE fund volunteer capacity development and CAS fund welfare reform and energy advice work. Total Income in 2016/17 was £390,918.

**The Service**

We provide information, advice and representation in a wide range of areas: social security benefits, housing, debt, employment, consumer, family and relationships, legal, health, utilities etc. In 2016-17 we provided advice to 3,440 people on 17,760 issues across 15 areas of law. Social security benefits are about 35% of our workload with legal issues, housing and debt the other key areas.

In April 2011 we achieved the Scottish National Standards for Information & Advice Providers in 46 areas of Housing, Welfare Benefits and Money Advice law. We provide advice and representation to Type III level (representation in sheriff court and benefits tribunals) in housing, money and welfare benefits. We are preparing for reaccreditation to the new scheme next year.

We operate a mix of drop-in and appointments five days per week with an email advice service offering out of hours contact. The In-Court Lay Representation Project provides advice and representation at mortgage respossession, eviction and sequestration court hearings and accepts referrals from four CABx, local authorities and a range of organizations. Our Health & Welfare Advice Hubs operate within five health centres across South Lanarkshire taking referrals from GPs and health practitioners and the Lanarkshire Domestic Abuse Housing & Welfare Adviser works across South Lanarkshire in partnership with NHSL, Police Scotland and a range of specialist support organisations.

**Strategic Planning & Development**

We have an ambitious plan in place which will enable us to transform HCAB service from a reactive service providing advice at times of crisis to proactively providing education, information, advice and support to help with life changes/ transitions and meeting different community needs.

**General Service**

This service is the front door to all CAB services and operates through a drop-in across four days each week; email and telephone contacts. The service is delivered by volunteer advisers, managed by the Team Leader and supported by specialist staff across the service as required. The drop-in service operates 9.30am – 4pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and 12.30pm to 3.30pm on a Friday. A triage system is in place and appointments are offered as appropriate.

This is a busy public facing service and requires careful management to ensure good use of resources and quality of advice.

A range of partners hold surgeries in the Bureau including Ethnic Minority Law Centre, Armed Services Advice Service, Pensionwise and Addiewell Money Advice Project. A range of formal and informal referral systems are in place for internal and external services.

The Session Supervisor will manage the advice service during drop-in sessions providing volunteers with support, mentoring and guidance as well as ensure quality of advice and implementation of operational policies and procedures.

**Updated November 2017**